

REMARKS

By the entry of this amendment, claims 25, 27 and 43 has been amended. Claims 22-27 and 43 remain pending in the application.

Claim 43 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter. Applicant has amended claim 43 to clarify the interrelationship between the program recorded on the recording medium and the image printing method for the image printing system.

Claims 22-25, 27 & 43 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ferlitsch (US 6,943,905 B2) in view of Ishii et al. (US Patent 5,598,279) in further view of Kuo (US Patent 5,513,013). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection.

Claim 25 is directed to an image printing system having a plurality of image output apparatuses connected and positioned next to each other, each apparatus having an input element for inputting image data, an instruction element for instructing by an operator to print out, a printing element for printing out image data using a printing device, removal opening corresponding to the printing device, and a printed item conveying device for conveying printed items between the image output apparatuses and conveying the printed items to the removal opening, comprising: an assigning element for assigning the image data instructed by the operator to the other image output apparatuses, in addition to performing the printout process itself; and a conveying element for conveying the printed items to the removal opening of the apparatus having requested the printing using the printed item conveying device if the image output apparatus itself is not the apparatus having requested the printing.

Ferlitsch discloses that the printing system can consists of a plurality of printers, but does not teach that the printers are positioned next to each other.

Ishii et al. discloses that the sorter of the printer has bins 111a-111x and distributes copies sequentially coming out of the apparatus body A to designated ones of the bins 111a-111x, but does not teach that the printer has a conveying device for conveying printed items to other printer.

Further, Ishii et al. discloses that a plurality of rollers are driven by a motor 110 to feed the consecutive copies, pawls adjoining the inlets of the bins 111 steer the copies into the associated bins 111, but does do not teach that the printer assigns image data instructed by an operator to other printer, in addition performing the printout process itself, and conveys the printed items to the bins of the printer having requested the printing if the printer itself is not the printer having requested the printing.

Thus, Ferlitsch and Ishii et al. do not teach the following limitations of claim 25:

- a plurality of image output apparatus are connected and positioned next to each other
- a printed item conveying device for conveying printed items between the image output apparatus and conveying the printed items to the removal opening
- an assigning element for assigning the image data instructed by the operator to the other image output apparatuses, in addition to performing the printout process itself
- a conveying element for conveying the printed items to the removal opening of the apparatus having requested the printing using the printed item conveying device if the image output apparatus itself is not the apparatus having requested the printing

Accordingly, even if Ferlitsch were fairly combined with Ishii et al., the combination of references would not provide sufficient rationale for finding the claims prima facie obvious as required under 35 U.S.C. 103. Therefore, Applicant asserts claim 25 should be allowable.

Claims 27 and 43 include substantially the same limitations as the claim 25, and therefore applicant asserts claims 27 and 43 should be allowable.

Claim 26 is independent to claim 25, and Kuo does not overcome the deficiencies of Ferlitsch and Ishii et al. with respect to the limitations of claim 25 mentioned above, and therefore applicant asserts claims 27 and 43 should be allowable.

In view of the above, all of the claims in this case are believed to be in condition for allowance, notice of which is respectfully urged.

Respectfully submitted,

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DATE

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